



CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

Public Comment

Date September 17, 1999

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program welcomes your participation. Please use the space below for your written comments (attach additional sheets if necessary).

Comments:

As a lifelong Northern Californian with a background in dry land farming and livestock ranching, I have some concerns about the CalFed Preferred Program Plan. ~~1. I am concerned about what appears to be a planned misconception regarding "groundwater storage" and "construction of groundwater storage". Less than 10% of this state even basically understands groundwater hydrology, and when you can't even answer the questions on how you plan the above I have to assume that your own decision makers do not understand that you cannot "store" groundwater. You can not use it and it will stay at a stable level for that aquifer or you can use it hoping that it will be replaced from the surface or another aquifer. This does not improve water reliability or assure adequate water for maintaining water quality and protecting the environment. What this does do is endanger the groundwater supplies of the NorthState and the agricultural based economy of the Central Valley. You have heard all the arguments for surface water storage and I do not plan to repeat them. What I would like to do is suggest that you consider changing the terminology of surface water storage to "wetland restoration" and consider using some of the many unproductive acres of land in the valley to design and construct new wetlands. If the water depth is 12 inches or 120 feet, the end result is still a "wetland" and will feed the groundwater aquifers along with giving wildlife a place to live, allow trees and plants to grow, and maybe improve the economy of the NorthState through tax cuts and tourist dollars.~~

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2. The agricultural industry of the Central Valley has already implemented massive conservation efforts, changed irrigation practices and changed the amount and types of production. How much further do you really believe that they can go without fallowing ground? Reliance on further conservation efforts by the agricultural industry is a dangerous assumption to make in light of the already fragile standing of family farms in California. If your plan is encourage more corporate farming that make their profits on the manufacturing/processing of agricultural produce then what you encourage is good. If you really are concerned about the family farm and local tax base of the NorthState, then you need to consider if your assumptions are based on fact or fantasy.
3. The term "conjunctive use" is nebulous at best and appears to be a cover-up for taking the surface water while using groundwater. There is nothing conjunctive about this - it is substitution of one source for another. Implementation of "groundwater monitoring" smacks of intrusion on personal property rights. Even voluntary monitoring will not be warning enough of critical overdraft situations. Placing the Valley Oak as an indicator species of groundwater health would be a start, but even that would only show a problem after overdraft and the very real loss of these trees. Once the aquifers are depleted, it may take years of normal to heavy rain to refill them without an increase in surface storage.
4. The Preferred Plan calls for 3 million acre-feet of additional water from the North. Since the emphasis is on conservation and water substitution this translates to groundwater - water that no one has ever done complete studies about to even show if it is there and how the removal of that much water would impact the quality of water and life of North California families.
5. For all the CalFed plans regarding the use of water in California, CalFed has no regulatory powers and must rely on the many other groups that already control water in the State. The SWCB, CVP, SWP, BLM, Nature Conservancy, County government, landowners, and many more all have conflicting plans regarding the water they control or would like to control. Who is and how are you going to engineer an accord between these sometimes warring factions.
6. Last, the people in decision-making levels of the CalFed hierarchy do not appear the have any ties to California water except as consumers at the urban level. If you have never enjoyed the smell of a newly plowed field, or reveled in watching cows at rest under a massive oak and listened to a hawk on the hunt, you do not have the right to make decisions about my lifestyle and tell me that agriculture is not doing enough when family farms have done more for conservation and the environment than all the urban dwellers in California.

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